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'Bugging' Comes Under Study

PUBLIC HEARINGS ARE BEING ARRANGED by both the Senate and House on the proliferation of eavesdropping devices.

This subject deserves congressional attention and, if necessary, legal clarification.

Electronic technology has raced ahead of the law in protecting individual privacy.

The fact that the federal government itself is probably the largest user of such devices doesn't alter the need for a full airing of their uses.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Central Intelligence Agency and the Pentagon make use of sound detection and recording equipment. Even the Post Office Department is said to "bug" its rest rooms.

For those federal agencies that haven't yet got into the game, the catalog of the General Services Administration lists an executive desk-pen set with concealed microphone, available to any agency for \$24.95 "for relaxed office dictation or discreet recording." The GSA also advertises, for \$9.60, a "telephone adapter for monitoring phone calls without a beep." The latter, incidentally, is strictly illegal, says another government agency, the Federal Communications Commission.

These examples point to the need for a full study of monitoring devices.

Undoubtedly, there is a legitimate place for much of the new equipment and the way it is used.

But the illegal and shady use of electronic snooping, which invades individual privacy is another matter.